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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes advances in bilingual education that help linguistically and culturally diverse (LCD) students reach high levels of achievement and performance. Factors to be considered include the native language, bilingualism and academic achievement, curriculum, parental and community influences, and programmatic evaluation. The reports assesses the status of the English language and the role of the non-English language among this population, suggesting that the relationship between bilingualism and academic achievement is seen as a positive relationship with a shift away from use of the home language to English. Research conducted with pre-school to middle school students is summarized, and the involvement of traditional educational institutions with nontraditional, ethnic parents is discussed. The impact of community, parents, and social class are briefly reviewed. The effectiveness of bilingual education programs is assessed, and alternative approaches to bilingual education are identified, such as the first or native language learning environment. (Contains 16 references.) (NAV)

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Directions
IN LANGUAGE & EDUCATION

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ADVANCES IN RESEARCH IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

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Introduction

As we prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must utilize what research has shown relating to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students to guide the implementation of innovative and comprehensive school-wide instructional practices that focus on helping all students meet high standards. The findings and conclusions from the research studies discussed here can be applied to help linguistically and culturally diverse students reach high levels of achievement and performance.

Areas of direct relevance to meeting the needs of LEP students include 1) the native language; 2) bilingualism and academic achievement; 3) curriculum; 4) parental and community influences; and 5) programmatic evaluation. These categories represent areas in which promising, ground-breaking research is being conducted in how best to educate limited English proficient (LEP) students. Finally, they represent areas that currently offer the best insights into this complex area.

What is the status of English among the limited-English proficient?

There is a pronounced shift from the home language to English. The younger the children, the more susceptible they are to social forces that lead them to abandon their first language (Wong Fillmore, 1991). English proficiency among adolescents is related to peer language use and pragmatic orientation toward language. In domains other than the home, there is a consistent shift toward English (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992). The often-repeated concern among policymakers and the general public that language minority youth do not want to learn English appears to be ill-founded. The importance of English is well established among these students: once they encounter English in school, students are quick to realize that the only language that counts is English, a language they are struggling to acquire.

What is the role of the non-English language?

In the rush to make students fluent in English, educators often overlook the fact that when they're not in school, students are immersed in a sociocultural milieu that requires the use of the non-English language. When the school does not support maintenance of the first language, the impact on the child's life away from school can be profound. As children abandon their native language, important

links to family and other members of the social infrastructure are gradually weakened and lost altogether. Parents are hampered in their ability to pass on family values and cultural traditions to their children. As the nation struggles to reverse an increase in the incidence of family dissolution, schools must do more to establish or strengthen the family as a unit. Encouraging the preservation of the first language is a step in that direction (Wong Fillmore, 1991).

Students who speak a language other than English deserve to be viewed as linguistic resources. Their ability in their native language must be nurtured. González (1991) concluded that Mexican American children, far from being alingual, are quite capable of producing complex grammatical constructions in Spanish. Aside from its linguistic value, the child's first language is critical to his/her identity. Building a positive self-concept in children and developing a healthy attitude toward schooling rests on valuing what the children bring with them from home-including the non-English language.

What is the relationship between bilingualism and academic achievement?

Bilingualism and high academic achievements are often seen as incompatible. Conventional wisdom has it that maintaining the first language while learning English impedes learning among LEP children. As Lindholm and Aclan (1991) acknowledge, research linking bilingualism to academic achievement has provided conflicting results. The more methodologically rigorous the study, the more positive the benefits of bilingualism on academic achievement to this student population.

Lindholm and Aclan (1991) examined reading and math achievement in both English and Spanish. The results showed that high proficiency bilinguals outscored medium proficiency bilinguals, who in turn performed better than low proficiency bilinguals. Some math knowledge and skills learned in Spanish transferred to English, suggesting that class time spent on developing the first language is time well spent. A certain level of proficiency is needed for transfer to occur; this level will vary by content area.

The acquisition of English writing among LEP students is an area of research that has barely begun to attract the attention it deserves. Seda and Abramson (1990) examined the emergence of English writing in a kindergarten classroom where the majority of children enrolled were LEP and spoke a variety of languages (Spanish, Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian). Of special interest were the levels of English writing development displayed by children learning English as a second language, but as a first *written* language. A comparison was made of the writing development of these children to that of native English speakers. Early results showed similar stages of writing development between the two groups. Interactive journal writing in small, heterogeneous groups appeared to be effective in promoting literacy development. Perhaps the most important finding was that learners need not be proficient in English to benefit from oral and written transactions in English.

Studies of private speech behaviors in bilingual children have suggested that private speech can serve important functions in the process of acquiring a second language. Díaz et al. (1991) examined the effects of bilingualism on the development of private speech in an attempt to discover transformations in cognitive processes at an early age. They observed children's

cognitive use of self-regulatory language as they performed three cognitive tasks involving block design, classification, and sequencing. Results revealed that the private speech of the bilingual preschoolers appeared to develop normally in relation to mental age, appeared to increase in frequency with task difficulty, and was gradually subvocalized.

Why are the curricular needs of language minority students not being met?

Kagan & García (1991) report that, despite an apparent growing interest in children's policy and in research focusing on childhood bilingualism and language acquisition, little attention has been paid to the early care and education of linguistically diverse preschoolers. Four factors are cited as responsible:

- The belief that young children can pick up language quickly and with little effort;
- The political controversy surrounding bilingual education;
- The belief that there are too few non-English dominant preschoolers to warrant attention; and
- The lack of integration of different disciplines in the conduct of research.

Questions that remain to be answered include:

- What are the social, emotional, and cognitive consequences of early childhood programs that seek to re-socialize children to a new set of standards?
- What are the consequences for the parents and the parent-child relationship when primary communication in the home is in a language different from that of the preschool?
- How do we make early childhood settings supportive of second-language learners? What is the value of investing in preschool bilingual/multicultural programs if children subsequently move into schools with different values and/or programs?

Kagan & García argue that what is needed is a new pedagogy that respects and integrates students' values, beliefs, histories, and experiences into the learning environment. The active role that students play in the teaching-learning process would be acknowledged, and strategies compatible with the language and culture of the students would be employed. In his review of research on sound education practices for linguistically and culturally diverse students, García (1991) distilled the following characteristics:

- emphasis on functional communication between teacher and students and among fellow students;
- organization of basic skills instruction and academic content around thematic units;
- use of collaborative learning techniques to foster student-student communication;
- use of Spanish and English at the lower grades but mostly English at the upper grades;
- high academic expectations for all students;
- principals who are well-informed about curriculum and instructional strategies; and
- high levels of parental satisfaction with the school.

The effect of culturally relevant academic intervention on middle school language minority students was explored by García (1993). The project's underlying assumption was that students can learn how to learn if the curriculum is revised to incorporate relevant strategies for schooling. The content areas of reading, English, science, mathematics, and social studies were involved. Results appear to suggest that academic outcomes favored the experimental group. Perhaps more important, the data showed increased self-esteem, aspirations to professional careers, enhanced academic strategies, and improved perceptions about schooling among the participating students.

How can traditional education institutions involve the nontraditional parent?

One of the more promising areas of research involves the contribution that parents and the community can make to the education of children. We often hear that it takes the whole village to educate the child, but specifics have been sorely lacking. It is a given that schools need to involve parents in schooling; however, to participate, parents need to know how the school system functions. In addition, they need to know about their rights and responsibilities in the education process.

Delgado-Gaitan (1991) found that neither the parents nor the school knew what parental involvement implied. Many parents lack specific cultural knowledge about schools and therefore are isolated from full participation in their children's education. The schools' use of culturally responsive communications encouraged parents to participate in their children's education. As a result, parents became aware of their rights and responsibilities concerning their children's education. This, in turn, allowed them to join with the others who shared their experiences, to enter into dialogue with the schools and to effectuate change in the schools. This critical reflection process was central to the empowerment of the parent groups involved in restructuring their school system.

How do ethnic parents view home learning materials? Goldenberg et al. (1991) investigated the relative effects of different types of home learning materials and activities on children's school achievement, with a focus on the effects of simple, photocopied story books (*libros*) on early Spanish literacy development. Results suggest that attending school seems to have a substantial effect on the frequency and the amount of time children experience literacy events at home, regardless of whether the events were stimulated by work sheets, papers, flyers, notices, or booklets sent home.

Parents' views of how children became literate clashed with theories on literacy development. Instead of being used to develop higher order thinking skills, the *libros* and worksheets were used by parents as repetition and copying tasks. The authors suggest either educating parents, or concentrating on what parents already know, believe, and can do in order to facilitate early literacy.

Are there perceived differences in school involvement between parents and non-parents? How parents and non-parents view their role in the education of their children is addressed by Alvarez et al. (1994). There appear to be major group differences concerning the amount of communication and involvement in school activities, because of the students' historical-cultural experiences. A potential result would be to provide strategies for school administrators to more effectively communicate with non-mainstream parents.

Among parents, inter- and intragroup differences were found in their recognition of and involvement in problems, and in their sense of self-efficacy. The implications are clear: to achieve a better understanding among policymakers, educators, and parents, the complexities of urban communities need to be understood so that special communication strategies can be designed and implemented to reach the ever-growing population of language minority parents.

What can knowledge of the community contribute to the education of language minority students?

Moll (1992) characterized instruction for working-class students [illegible]l or monolingual, as intellectually limited, with an emphasis on low-level literacy and co[illegible]onal skills. He proposed that education institutions adopt a sociocultural approach in which classrooms are socially and culturally organized so that specific practices mediate the intellectual work children accomplish. Central to understanding this is how and why children come to use essential cultural tools such as reading, writing, math, or certain modes of discourse within the activities that make up life in the classroom.

The role of the teacher is to enable and guide activities that involve students as thoughtful learners in socially and academically meaningful tasks. Children and their families constitute *"funds of knowledge"* that represent essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge and information that households use to survive, to get ahead, or to thrive. A classroom with 30 students in it represents 30 households *and* their networks with their respective funds of knowledge.

How do teachers develop and use "funds of knowledge"? Teachers need to conduct household visits to document "funds of knowledge". Parents and others in the community can contribute intellectually to the development of lessons. By documenting what goes on in the child's environment, a network for accessing funds of knowledge is created. Gradually, these funds of knowledge become a regular part of classroom instruction. For the students, accessing the funds of knowledge involved considerable reading and writing in both languages. Literacy in both languages resulted from analysis and expression, not as isolated reading and writing exercises. The teacher served as facilitator as the students interacted with text and with the social resources made available.

The clear implication of the study is that classrooms across the country are underusing a very valuable resource: the community and its members. Educators must provide a greater role for parents than serving as mere window dressing. When the home and the school are brought closer together, the children become active partners with the schools in the learning process.

Are there problematic areas one has to be aware of before implementing this approach? As with any new approach, this one raises questions regarding limits on the use of the information gained from the students and their parents. Are there any subjects considered taboo? How often do funds of knowledge need to be updated? Does the process for accessing funds of knowledge change for students in the middle school and high school? Are all content areas equally accessible to the approach? These and other questions must be addressed in considering widespread use of the "funds of knowledge" concept.

How effective are bilingual education programs?

The effectiveness of bilingual education programs has traditionally been under question. Various components such as methodology, approach, and philosophy have been of special interest. In an attempt to settle the question of the efficacy of bilingual programs, the U. S. Department of Education (DOE) requested research evidence from experts in the field.

The Ramírez Report (Ramírez et al., 1991, Volumes I & II) compares the relative effectiveness of two alternative programs (structured English immersion and late-exit transitional bilingual programs). The findings of the Ramírez Report suggest what most researchers in bilingual education are already cognizant of: that students in late-exit instructional programs do better than students in early-exit and structured English programs. In addition, providing language minority students with substantial and relevant amounts of instruction in their primary language enhances their ability to improve their English language skills and their cognitive skills in content areas, ceteris paribus.

Of marked importance is the conclusion that instructional strategies used by all teachers in all three programs created a passive language learning environment, limiting student opportunities to develop more complex language and critical thinking skills. If research on effective teaching strategies is to be believed, most teachers in all types of traditional programs are failing to challenge their students. If this is the case, all students, not just language minorities, are being educationally shortchanged.

What do other studies have to say about the efficacy of bilingual education?

Cazden (1992) reports on other comparable programs serving language minority students. One such program is the seminal longitudinal study of the Navajo Nations' exemplary Rock Point Navajo-English bilingual/bicultural program. In addition, she drew other conclusions and implications from the Ramírez Report. She justly states that the qualifications of the bilingual cohort teachers were superior in Spanish and as proficient, if not more so, than teachers from traditional programs.

Cazden also suggests that parent involvement is critical and that there is sufficient research evidence to strongly suggest that culturally enriched and relevant curricula coupled with effective and relevant home and school communication will increase parent participation in their children's education. This, in turn, has been shown to increase the children's performance.

Another study of studies (Collier, 1992) concludes that the greater the amount of first language instructional support, combined with balanced second-language support, the higher the second language academic achievement in each succeeding academic year, when compared with matched groups schooled monolingually in the second language. Studies of language minority students schooled in bilingual education programs for more than three years demonstrate that such students outperform their comparison group and begin to reduce the distance between their performance and norm-group performance. Monolingually-schooled children appear to do well in the early grades, but the gains are reduced as they reach the upper elementary and secondary grades. The test scores reported are for English reading and English math, as these are the most commonly-reported scores across all studies.

Two-way bilingual education programs show strong potential for high academic achievement by lessening social distance and unequal social status relations between majority and minority language students. Those students participating for at least 4-5 years tend to score high on standardized tests in English. Late-exit program results also show promise. In programs that provide no support for the first

language, students take a long time to catch up with their peers (Collier, 1992). Programs that nurture the first language and take the time to establish a firm cognitive foundation may take longer, but the end result is well worth the effort.

Are there alternative approaches when bilingual programs are not practical?

Lucas & Katz (1994) report on English-only programs that hold promise for assisting LEP students in situations that make full-fledged bilingual program impractical. They remind us that it is not always possible to implement a bilingual program to meet the needs of LEP students, desirable as it may be. They acknowledge that because it takes at least 4 years for a LEP student to become proficient in academic uses of the second language, it is impractical to postpone teaching content until they become proficient in English. If all instruction is provided in English, students not fluent in English cannot hope to compete successfully with their fluent-English classmates. From a pedagogical perspective, special alternative instructional programs (SAIPs) represent one practical approach to meeting the needs of LEP students in contexts where students speak several different native languages and where qualified bilingual staff are not available.

The study sought to identify in what contexts, to what extent, for what purposes and in what ways students' native languages were used in these English-based programs. The classrooms were multilingual environments where the students' first language provided access to academic content, to classroom activities, and to their own knowledge and experience. The first language acted as a medium for social interaction and establishment of rapport, fostered family involvement, and assisted in students' development of and pride in their native languages and cultures. The native language became an important instructional strategy that varied in site-specific ways. At some sites, instructional aides used the students' native language to check for comprehension or explain activity; at others, the native language was used for social interaction among students.

Since the study did not compare SAIPs to any other type of programs, the authors were not able to determine whether SAIPs are as effective for language and content learning as programs where students' native languages are integral to instruction. The study does, however, underscore the necessity of including students' native language for students learning English. The authors suggest that less attention be focused on language, since language use in and of itself is not the critical issue. The question that must be posed is, "What circumstances and strategies will provide the best opportunities for particular students to learn in a particular context? And how can educators assure that these strategies are followed to the benefit of the student?" The inescapable fact is that the first language remains a viable means of creating a positive learning environment for LEP students.

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